

Excavations

Previous Work

Significant archeological remains were discovered at the Hotel Lot during the survey and testing program completed in 1983 (Thompson 1984). The research for that project revealed that the northern part of the lot had been severely disturbed, first by the demolition of the stone house (Plate 5), and then by the installation of gasoline storage tanks when the filling station was built. In addition, the project right-of-way cut across the corner of the block at an angle (see Figure 12) leaving the majority of the project area on the southern half of the block. Since there was no hope of retrieving undisturbed contexts on the northern half of the block, test units were placed closer to the eastbound lanes of Route 4. A test square near North 500 East 365¹ (Figure 13) revealed a segment of stone foundation and subsequent test units were placed to (partially) reveal it. These tests revealed that while there was little undisturbed soil above the subsoil on the eastern third of the grassy island which separated the gas station tarmac from the northbound lanes of Route 7, the old surface sloped rather sharply toward the west from the western side of the stone foundation, and that the present surface was built up on layers of fill that increased in thickness toward the west. An additional test trench was placed along the North 470 grid line, between East 365 and East 385. In this area there was two and a half feet of fill across the lot, revealing that the old ground surface had also sloped rather more sharply than the present grade south of the stone foundation. A large quantity of stone rubble was included among the fill and what appeared to be an another intact stone foundation. The loose rubble was presumed to be the remains of the stone dwelling which had been bulldozed off of the northern half of the lot. The foundation features and the fact there appeared to be undisturbed soils adjacent to them suggested that the remains at this site were significant.

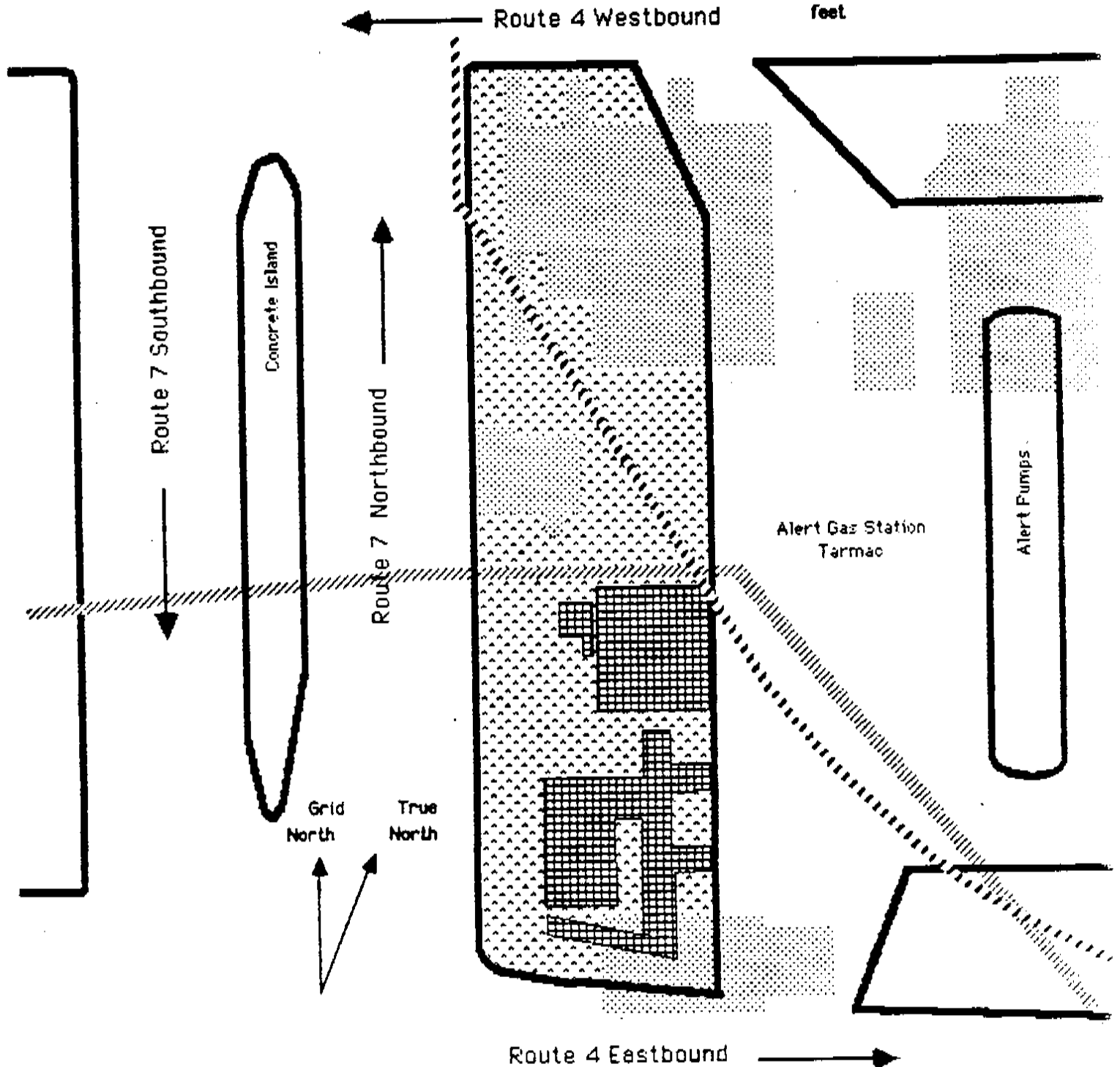
Data Recovery

The excavation strategy for the data recovery project included the hand excavation of the area around the upper foundation, where there was little or only a small amount of fill overburden, and the use of excavation machinery² to remove the heavier fill deposits on the southern portion of the lot. The objective was to identify and sample the undisturbed contexts that originated on the lot, and to discard or ignore contexts that were fills that may have originated elsewhere. A machine trench along the southern end of the grassy island revealed a complex series of fills overlying a probable sewer(?) pipe trench in the southwest corner and subsoil at a depth of two and a half feet further east (see Figure 14). No undisturbed surfaces were observed in this unit. Next, a machine trench was placed, connecting the first, north-and-south on the west side of the West 365 grid line (Figure 13). Between about North 449 and North 455 a line of apparently in-situ concrete blocks was observed in the east profile of this trench (Figure 15). These features correspond to the northern edge of the "Pearl Jenkins" house, which was removed when the eastbound lanes of Route 4 were constructed after 1966. At about North 462 a concentration of large rocks, rubble, and mortar were observed which represent the remains of a large stone foundation wall. This wall turns toward the north and runs along the western

Figure 12: Site Plan
Riseing Son Tavern: Site Plan

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|--------------------------------|
|  | Existing curb line |  | Previously demolished building |
|  | Proposed Right-of-way |  | 1985 Archeological Excavations |
|  | Existing sewer | | |

0 10 20
feet



-

West: 345

Figure 14: South Wall Profile, East-West Backhoe Trench

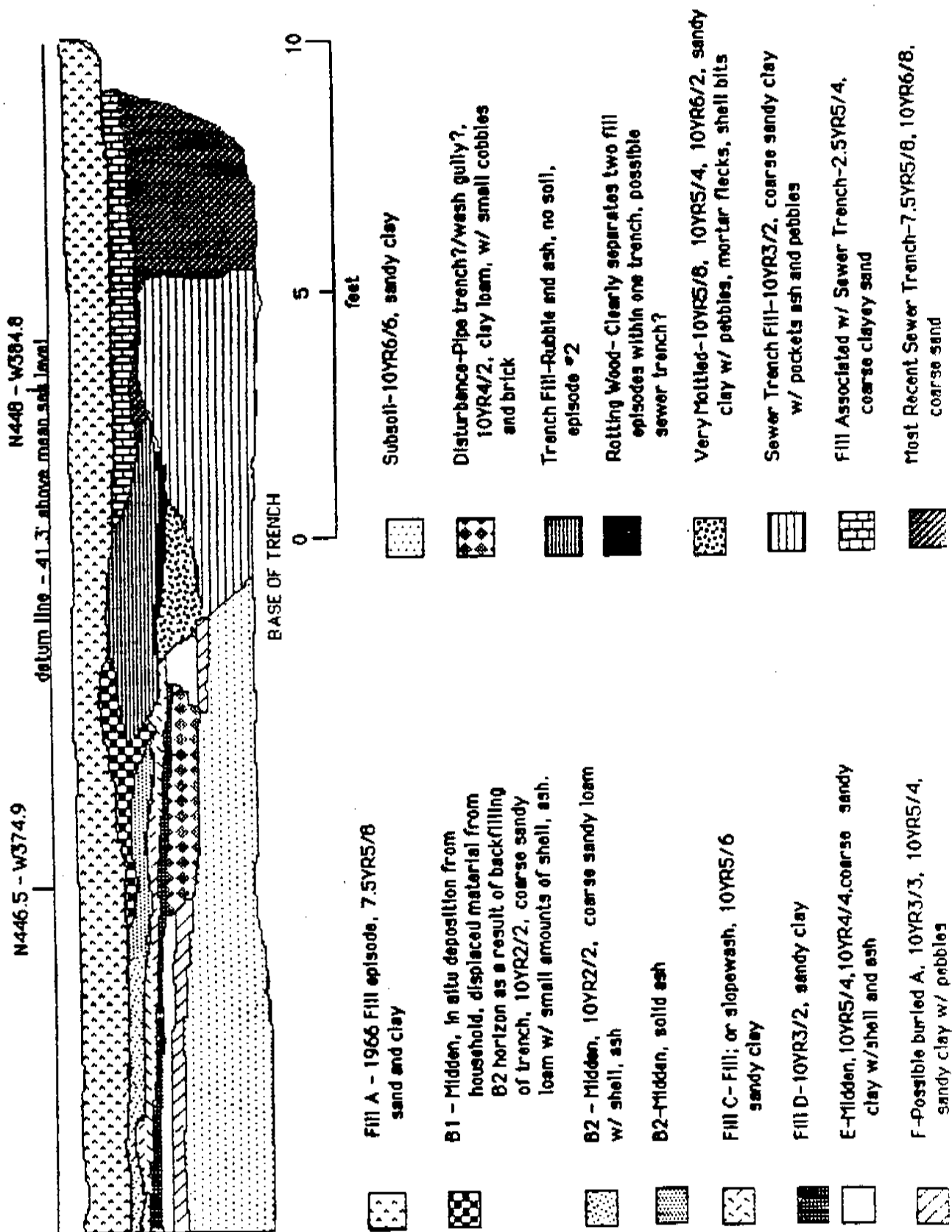
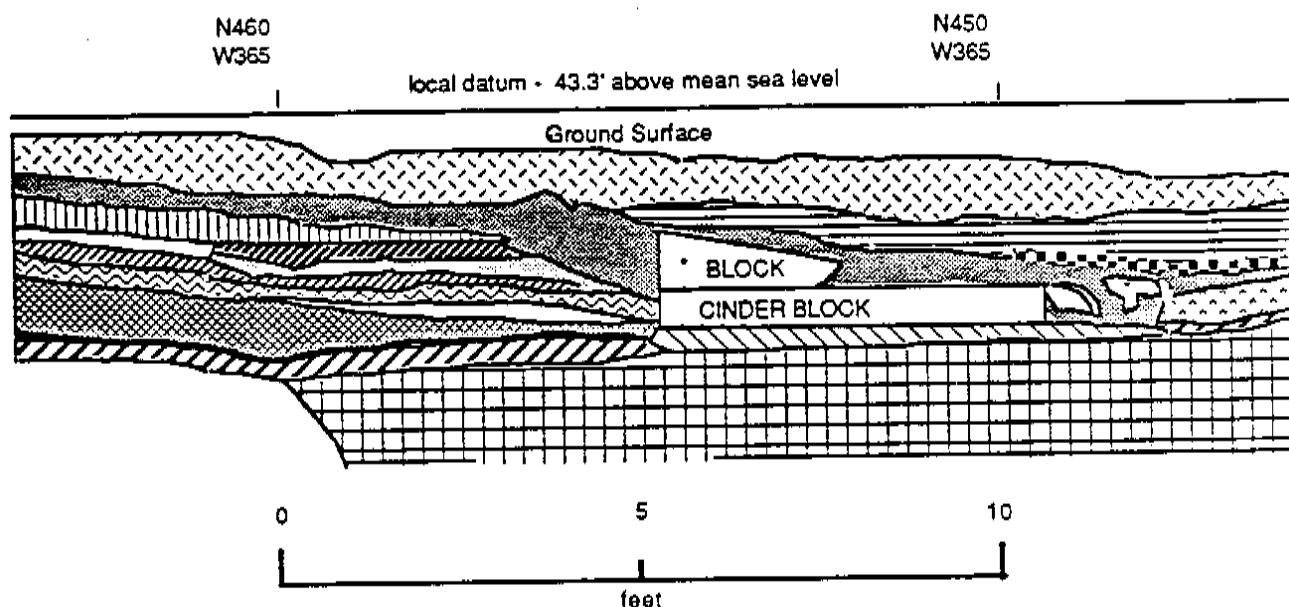



















Figure 15: East Wall Profile, North-South Backhoe Trench



- | | |
|--|---|
|  Fill A-10YR4/4, coarse sandy clay w/ ash and brick flecks |  Fill G1-10YR4/6, micaceous sand |
|  Fill B-7.5YR5/6, coarse sandy clay |  Fill G2-10YR4/6, 5YR5/8, micaceous sand and clay |
|  Thin Lens-2.5YR6/4, silty clay, lies below Fill B |  Fill H-10YR3/2, large rocks and rubble mortar and charcoal |
|  Fill C-10YR3/3, coarse loamy soil w/ ash |  Charcoal Ribbon- Runs between rubble and Ab layer |
|  Fill D-Oyster shell w/ small amounts coarse sand |  AB-10YR4/3, clay loam |
|  Fill E-Mixing of E1 and E2 |  Poured Cement Floor |
|  Fill E1-10Yr5/6, 10YR5/8, clay w/ pebbles, small amount coarse sand |  Sterile Fill Lens-Layers consisting of: 10YR5/6, clay; 10YR3/1, silty clay w/ ash; 10YR5/4, fine sand w/ clay; white ash: |
|  Fill E2-2.5YR5/4, shell |  Subsoil-10YR5/8, 10YR7/2, mottling sandy clay w/ pebbles and cobbles |
|  Fill F-5YR5/6, clay w/ small amount of sand and medium sized pebbles | |

wall of the machine trench to about gridline North 490, where it turns to the east again. Below the numerous fill horizons and above the undisturbed subsoil is a horizon of dense charcoal with some artifacts mixed, suggesting the possibility that the structure that stood on the foundation had burned. Two short trenches were cut to the east from the north-south trench terminating at the curbline of the paved apron of the Alert Gas Station, which represents the eastern boundary of the excavations (Figure 13). The charcoal horizons in these unit, as well as in the north-south trench were all hand excavated and screened.

An additional block of machine excavation was carried out between North gridlines 458 and 485 and East gridlines 375 and 392 (Figure 13). A balk for profile recording was left between this block excavation and the previously mentioned north-south trench along West 365. The profile along the east wall of this block, on gridline West 375, shows numerous small fill episodes, which have been grouped into four major units (Figure 16). The layer of large rocks illustrated at the north (left) end of this profile had been encountered during the test excavations, and we had originally assumed that it represented the bulldozing of the house at the north end of the lot. For this reason, the machine cut was continued to just above the lowest intact Ab Horizon on the assumption that all the horizons above this had been disturbed in the last twenty years. An examination of the long profile reveals a rather compact horizon with banded layers of shell and cinders, between Fill horizons 2 and 3, and this material has the appearance of in-situ accumulated household midden deposit - stove cleanouts and the like. Few artifacts were observed in this horizon, but if it does represent a stable surface deposited by the occupants of the house at the top of the lot, then the rock rubble below it must represent a destruction episode of the building that stood on the foundation identified in the trench to the east, rather than the destruction of the house. We interpret this structure as the "stone barn" mentioned in various documents, by virtue of its position and the recovery of some tools nearby. Archeological evidence of occupation of the house after the destruction of the barn was removed without sampling, but the lower horizons were all excavated by hand and screened in five-foot-by-five-foot units, as indicated on the Excavation Plan (Figure 13).

The Ab horizon indicated in the profile along gridline North 458 thickened toward the west and contained numerous artifacts (Plate 6), suggesting that it is a midden deposit area between the barn and the fence line running north-south roughly along gridline West 385. A profile that runs east-west along gridline North 485 at the north wall of the backhoe block illustrates this increase in the thickness of the A horizons as well as the fact that the surface is sloping downward toward the old alignment of Mill Lane, which was not paved prior to 1966³ (Figure 17). The rather indistinct disturbances along the west side of the backhoe block, west of the fence line, are consistent with an unpaved roadway in which the current path of preference may "meander" in response to ruts, puddles, and other disturbances in the unimproved road surface (Thompson 1975 describes an archeological example). The fence line was indicated by a series of over-lapping postholes and disturbances, representing at least one, and probably more, episodes of repair and/or reconstruction.

Figure 16: East Wall Profile, Backhoe Block

N457
W375

N480
W375

local datum - 44.1' above mean sea level

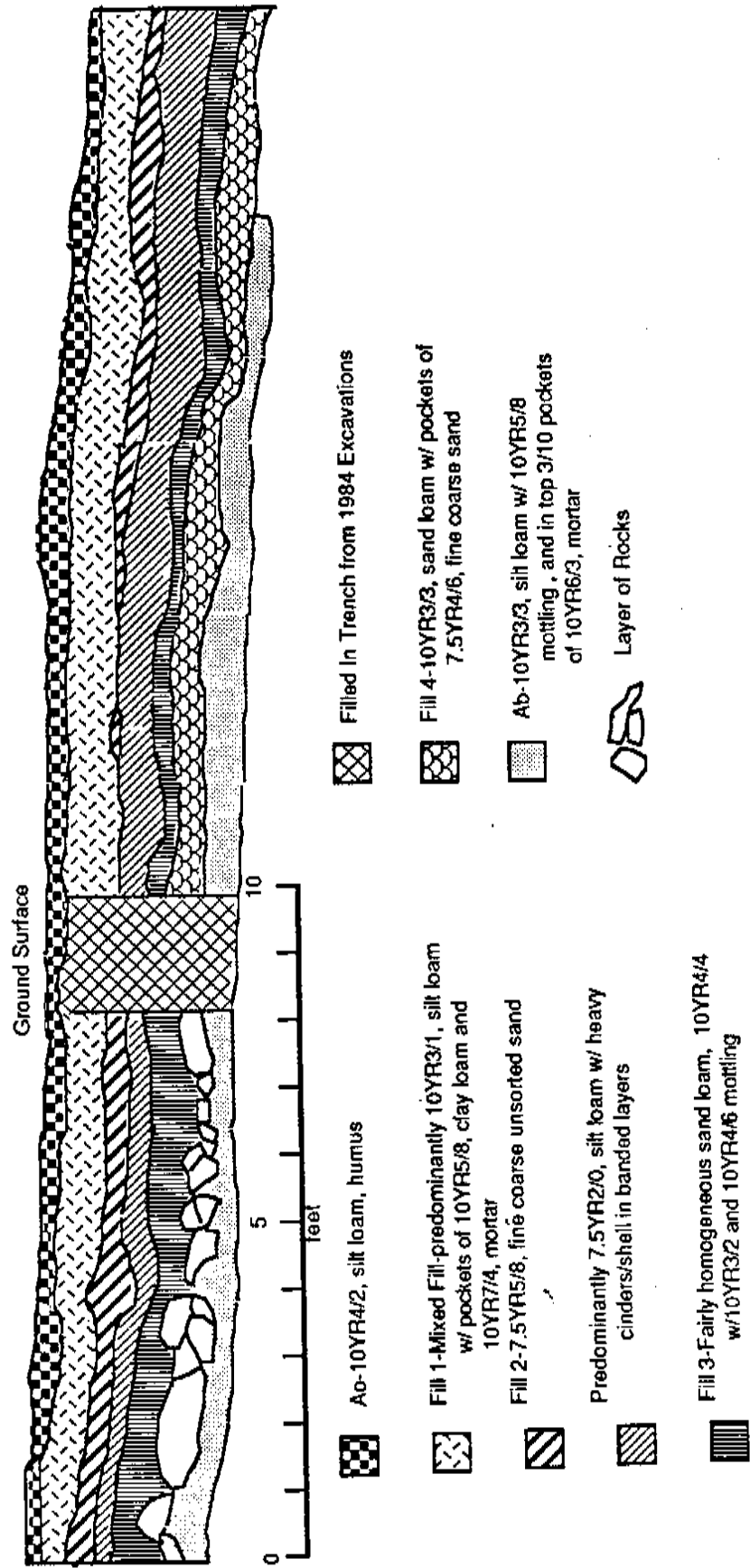
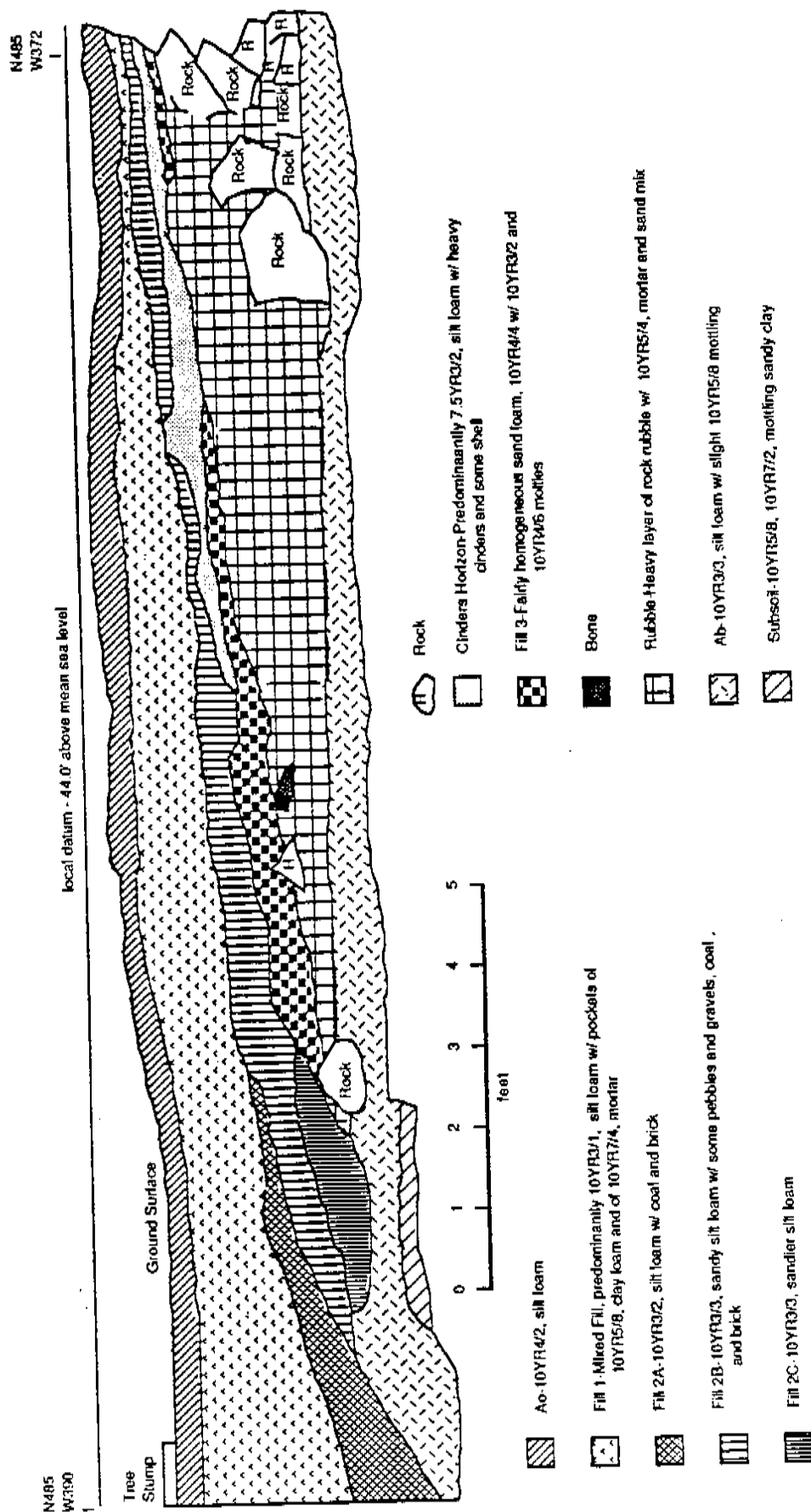
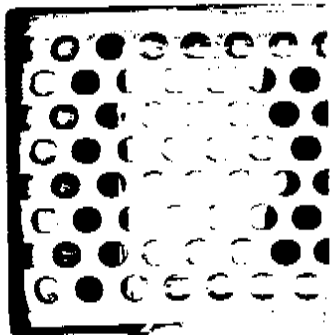


Plate 6: Profile, Gridline N458



Figure 17: North Wall Profile, Backhoe Block





within it was cleared out (Plate 7). This interior area contained disturbed fill over sterile sub-soil and so was not screened. The area of the foundation where the fill horizons had been observed thickening during the testing program, was screened in five-foot-by-five-foot units. As the first units were placed it was possible to identify the disturbed profiles, and these were shovelled out of adjacent units without the fills contained "pop tops" and other recent detritus, and are like those with the destruction of the residence on the north side of the lot. At North 515, a rather compact and distinct cinders horizon was observed in the amorphous disturbed fill and above the old surface west of the lot. This context differed from cinders horizons observed further south. At those locations the cinders were rather large and appeared to be from household stoves. The cinders in this case were red and compact, and had originated from a rather more concentrated fire. They were considered artifacts.

The excavations of the five-foot-by-five-foot squares North 520 West 375 (designated by their southwest corners) were originally perceived as a pit at the northwest corner of the stone house. The disturbance was rather deeper than the adjacent midden horizons, and rocks in the bottom, and was designated "Area A" (see Figure 12). After thoroughly trowelling the area north of the north wall of the stone house a linear stain was observed which appeared to connect with the trench to the west (see Figure 13), and the entire Feature was ultimately designated Feature 99 (Plate 7). It was excavated in increments, by five-foot units. It was determined to contain only fill, and a horizon of rocks and rubble at the bottom, these units constituted the only vertical subdivision of the feature. The bottom of the feature trends slightly downward from northwest to southeast, and, because of the coarse rubble fill in the bottom, was interpreted as a French Drain (Plate 8). At its northeast end, it was shown on the north profile of North 525 West 360, it is obliterated by the trench shown on Figure 12. The area further to the northeast is known to be disturbed by feeder lines connecting the gasoline storage tanks to the excavated area with the pump islands for the gas station. To the south the feature was getting shallower, and was almost devoid of artifacts in that direction. It obviously had originally been directed to the south, to the Lane and its "outfall" terminated there. The dating of the feature is given more detail in the chapter on artifact analysis, and it will suffice to say that it dates to the late 1760's and is therefore considerably older than the house investigated on the lot. Beyond the identification of its function, the functional interpretation must remain speculative. Its source has been a privy, or privies to the northeast, but evidence of these is lacking. The subsoil in this area is rather clayey, and the rather more extensive facilities expected for a tavern in comparison to a domestic house have created drainage problems at the privy location which the feature was designed to alleviate. The date of the artifacts suggest that the feature predates the construction of the stone house, and would be associated with occupation at the earlier log dwelling mentioned in the 1800's.

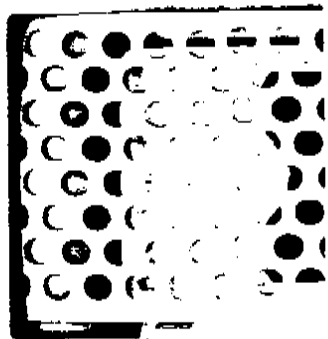


Plate 7: Upper Foundation



Figure 18: North Wall Profile, N520, between W375 and W364.2

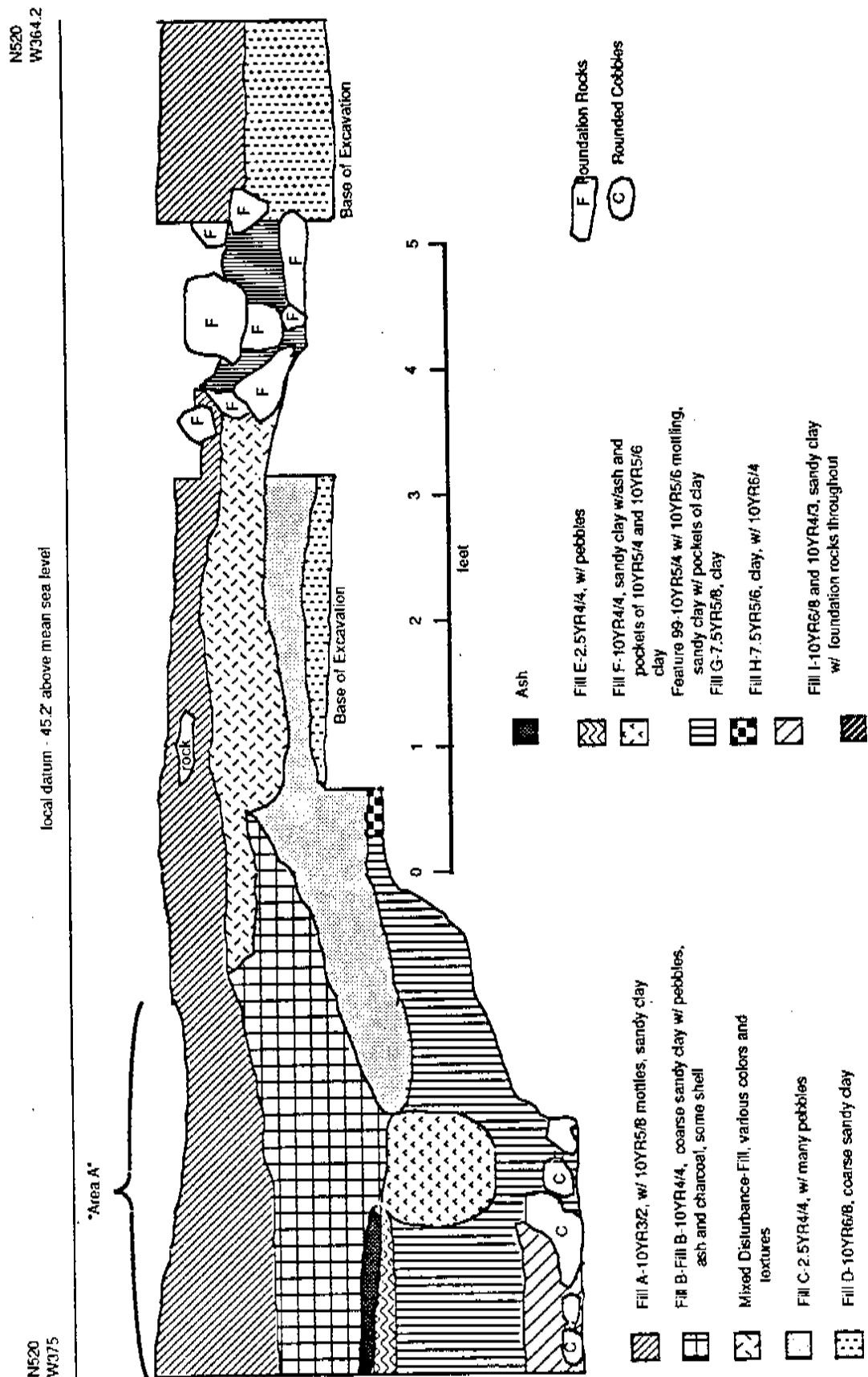
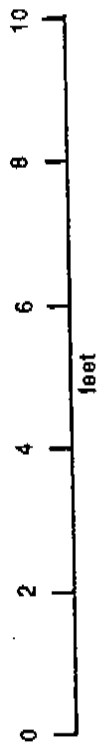
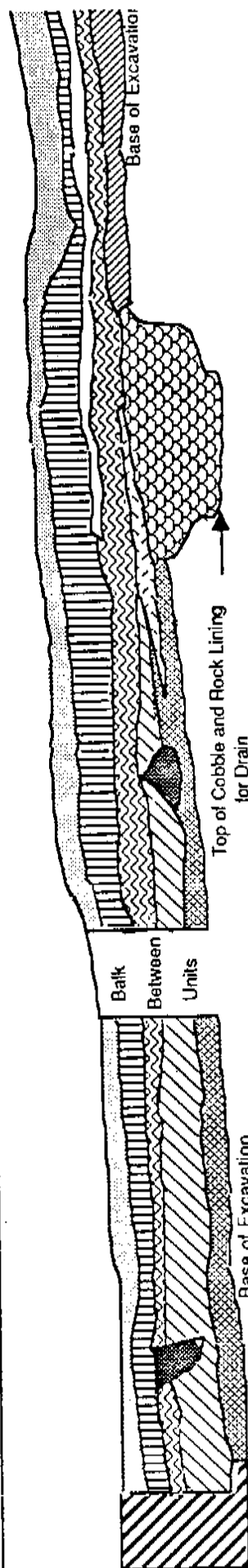


Figure 19: West wall Profile, W375, between N500 and N530

N500
W375

"Area A"

local datum - 45.8' above mean sea level













- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1984 Trench Fill |  | Root Disturbance |
|  | Fill A-10YR3/3 and 10YR6/8, sandy loam w/ clay pockets, rounded pebbles, and small cobbles |  | Coal Ash Lens |
|  | Fill B-10YR6/8 and 2.5YR4/4, sandy clay w/ some mortar, charcoal pockets, rounded pebbles, and small cobbles |  | Ab-10YR5/4 and 10YR6/6, sandy loam w/ pebbles and small cobbles increasing in number with depth, some oyster shell |
|  | Fill C-2.5YR4/4, 5YR4/6 and 10YR3/3 grading in, coarse sandy loam w/ small amount of oyster shell, small rounded pebbles, and occasional bits of coal ash |  | Subsoil-10YR6/8, sandy clay w/ pebbles and small cobbles |
|  | Fill D-10YR6/6 and 10YR5/3, coarse sandy clay w/ pebbles, small cobbles, some blocky rocks |  | Feature 99-10YR5/6 and 10YR6/8, coarse sandy loam grading into sandy clay with depth and 10YR7/2 clay mottling and 7.5YR6/8 near bottom |

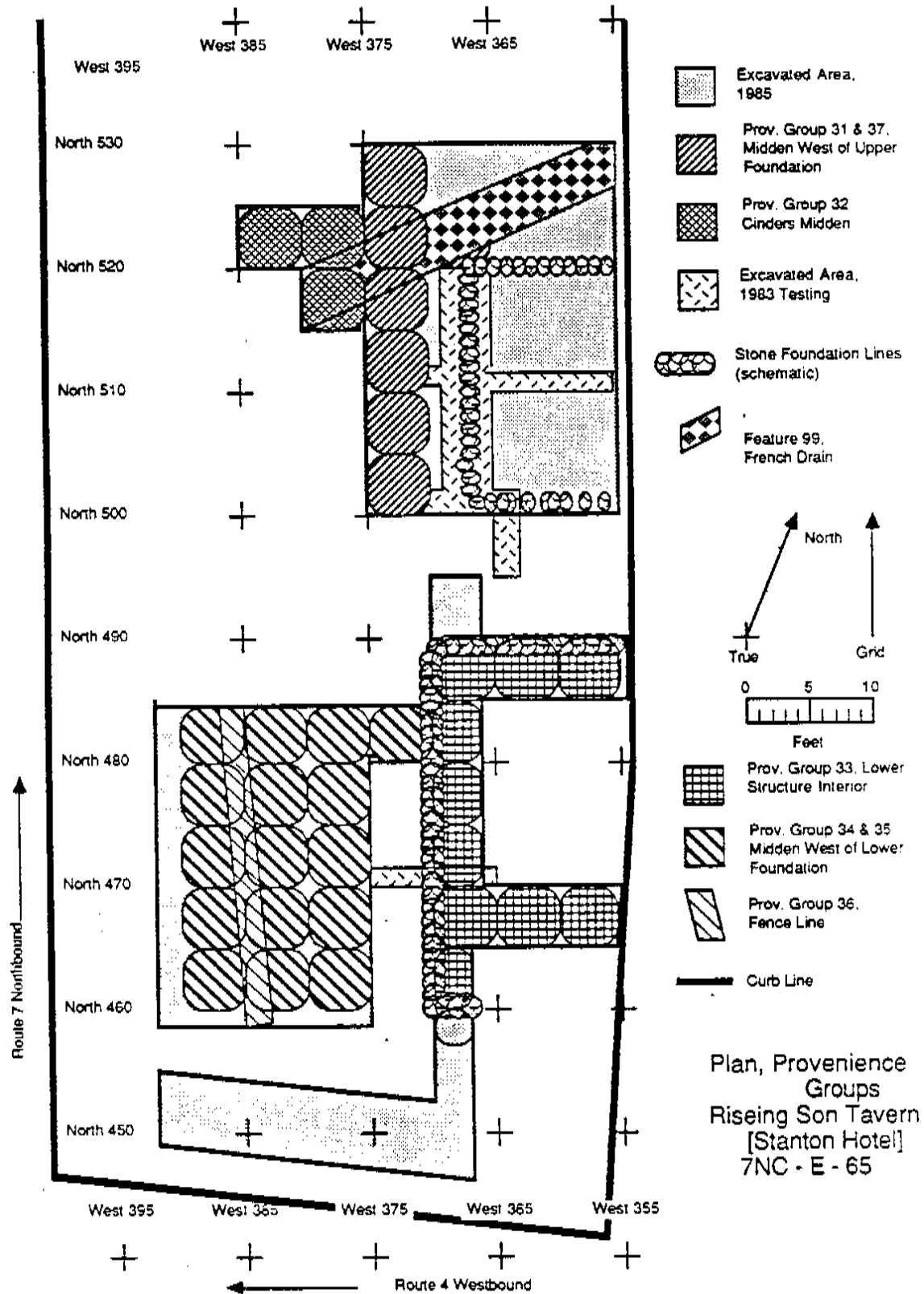
Plate 8: Feature 99



In summary, a drainage feature, a fence line and broad areas of midden were hand excavated and screened. Sections of two undressed and dry laid foundation were exposed. Neither structure had a basement, consistent with service facilities such as barns and stables. The lower foundation, of heavier construction showed an interior width of twenty eight feet across the one dimension that could be measured. The upper foundation was eighteen feet across in the same (north-south) direction. The intensity of the cinders midden adjacent to it, as well as the presence of burned metal and slag suggest the possibility that a forge may have been operated out of this structure. The relationship between Feature 99, the French Drain, is not entirely clear from the excavation context. There was some disturbance to the upper part of the French Drain fill at the corner of the foundation, and this might suggest that the foundation post-dated the feature. A couple of sherds of Pearlware were found among the foundation stones in situations that were, unfortunately, not clearly in-situ. If these artifacts do date the construction of the foundation that it almost certainly does post-date the feature, but the situation is not entirely clear. No large artifact bearing features such as filled in wells or privies were discovered during the data recovery, and the fill in the French Drain appeared to contain artifacts from secondary deposition. The majority of the materials collected are therefore from midden or equivalent contexts, but the sample is fairly sizeable and certainly allows useful conclusions to be drawn about the occupation at the site.

To provide coherent units for interpretation the excavation contexts were grouped, and the distribution of these groups is indicated on Figure 20. The organization of these groups depends to a certain degree on the results of the artifact analysis so a more complete discussion of the groups will be presented in the next chapter. In terms of field contexts, these units have been described already: Provenience Group 31 includes the midden horizons which lie west of the upper foundation where the old ground surface slopes toward Mill Lane. Provenience Group 32 is the cinders midden deposits west and northwest of the northwestern corner of the upper foundations (these can be clearly separated from the previously described midden on the basis of the soil matrix). Provenience Group 37 are the fill horizon(s) that were screened in the process of defining the stratigraphy and separating the in-situ surfaces from the fills. Although these materials are likely to be twice removed from their use context, it seems reasonable to assume that they originated on the lot and were simply moved around in the process of "landscaping" the lot after the destruction of the house. The highest fill horizons on the lower part of the lot, which contain micaceous sands and are obviously brought in from elsewhere, were sterile of artifacts. With the exception of a thin veneer of recent fill, the sterile sub-soil was at the surface within the interior of the upper foundation and a short distance to the south, so no artifacts were recovered from that location. The surface that dated from the most recent use of that structure had obviously been removed in the various construction activities. Provenience Group 33 includes materials collected from the in-situ (but apparently burned) surface of the interior of the lower structure. Provenience Groups 34 and 35 include the midden deposits west of the lower structure there is a division between the lowest levels of that midden (Provenience Group 34) and the higher levels on a basically arbitrary basis within each unit. The postholes and generally disturbed soils around and adjacent to them were kept separate during excavation and have been designated Provenience Group 36. Multiple overlapping postholes were present, and could not reliably be separated

Figure 20: Provenience Group Plan



during excavation. Provenience Group 38 includes "General Surface Collection", or materials gathered non-systematically and not from the screen. The inevitable bias in favor of larger, lighter, and brighter (more eye-catching items) makes these materials not strictly comparable to the other contexts, although their number is small and they were included in some data summaries. The contents of these groupings is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Notes: Excavations

¹The grid system was established during the testing program, and a complete description of it is provided in that report (Thompson 1984).

²The machine provided by the Kiamensi Unit of the Delaware Department of Transportation was a Ford 6500 backhoe-loader with a four-foot smooth edged "cemetery" bucket, which made extremely smooth sided cuts. The operator, Mr. Davis, was extremely skillful.

³This is the "new road" mentioned in the deeds from the 1790's, and a century and three-quarters of wagon and other vehicle traffic had "intrenched" this thoroughfare below the surrounding grade. The construction plans for the 1966 improvements indicate that Mill Lane was not paved at that time.